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Memories of Maratha History and Regional Identity in Maharashtra, India

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> In any case, these records are of value on the principle which Grote applied to the older Greek writings—"the curtain is the picture."
>
> —*K. T. Telang*[1]

> A discursive understanding of regions as imagined communities that sought to identify their space within the broader Indian national community in various ways has only recently begun to replace the tired framework of "regionalism" as primarily a thorn in the side of Indian "national integration."
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> —*Prachi Deshpande*[2]

The leading industrial state in India, Maharashtra is widely seen as a region with a cohesive political identity stemming from the millennium-old rich heritage of Marathi language and literature, as wells as from a shared historical legacy.[3] This article dwells on the complex, shifting collective memories of Maratha[4] history centered on the heroic figure of the seventeenth-century *maratha* king Shivaji Bhosale who valiantly carved out a kingdom virtually from scratch in the face of stiff opposition by the sultan of Bijapur and the Delhi-based Mughal emperor. It argues that these memories have played a crucial role in the fabrication as well as fragmentation of regional identity in modern Maharashtra.

The first section of the article covers the period from the 1840s when the British consolidated their hold over the region (after the defeat of the Marathas in 1818) to 1960 that marked the formation of Maharashtra as a state within the Indian federation owing to the Marathi-speaking people's mass movement for statehood. It charts the discourses fashioned from various perceptions of caste, class, religion, and nation, which contributed to the emergence of a seemingly consensual construct of Shivaji as a key axis of regional identity. The second section delves into the state's cultural politics during the last five decades and highlights certain dramatic episodes that were triggered by supposed slights to the hallowed memory of the king. The third section briefly analyzes these episodes in light of the earlier historical discussion. It reveals the contested character of regional identity in contemporary Maharashtra, which is riven by deep-seated

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antagonism between different communities, as also by the dialectics of "civil society" and "political society" in the state's fragile public sphere.

Contested Commemorations

As previously noted, a key strand in the political culture of modern Maharashtra comprises certain prominent constructs of Shivaji, which offer different interpretations of the precise nature and long-term significance of his career. For the sake of analytical convenience, the constructs are divided into five broad categories: *bahujan*, nationalist, Hindutva-centric, communist, and consensual.

Bahujan

This construct was first articulated by the nineteenth-century public intellectual and social reformer Jotiba Phule (1827–90), who founded the non-brahman[5] movement in Maharashtra, which sought to mobilize the *bahujans*, or the numerous "lower" castes designated as *shudras* within the traditional Hindu social hierarchy. In his famous ballad on Shivaji, published in 1869, Phule described the king as "a guardian of the peasantry"[6]—a king in whom the *shudra* masses could take pride. Projecting Shivaji as a self-made man, raised and inspired by his mother Jijabai, he wrote skeptically[7] about Dadoji Kondadev—a *brahman* administrator conventionally treated as the king's mentor.[8] Elsewhere, Phule even held Kondadev guilty of keeping Shivaji in ignorance.[9] In the *magnum opus, Sarvajanik Satya Dharma Pustaka* (1891), he accused the *brahman* saint Ramdas (1608–82) —seen by many as Shivaji's guru—of misleading "the illiterate, *shudra*, brave Shivaji"[10] and inciting him against the Muslims.[11]

Phule himself belonged to the *mali* caste of gardeners; but his countercultural intervention envisioned an inclusive alternative to the orthodox *brahmanical* order. His understanding of Shivaji was anchored in this larger project. However, subsequently, *maratha* leaders and intellectuals began to emphasize Shivaji's—and being his descendants, their own—status as *kshatriyas*: the category of warrior castes just below the *brahmans* in the traditional Hindu social hierarchy. This was a gambit aimed at countering the *brahmans*' tendency to treat them as *shudras*.[12]

Krishnarao Arjun Keluskar (1860–1934), a follower of Phule, published the first biography of Shivaji from a *bahujan* perspective.[13] The very title of the book described the Maratha king as "the scion of a *kshatriya* family." Keluskar vehemently criticized the perceived brahmanical appropriation of Shivaji. He stressed Shivaji's originality and refuted the contention of Mahadev Govind Ranade (1842–1901)—prominent liberal leader, judge and scholar—that the king had been significantly influenced by Ramdas or by the *bhakti* movement.[14] He accused the ace nationalist leader B. G. Tilak (1856–1920) and his followers of failing to use the funds they had raised to publish a biography of Shivaji, and of belittling the latter vis-à-vis the Peshwas.[15] Keluskar's confreres included the noted *maratha* intellectual Vitthal Ramji Shinde (1873–1944) and Keshav Sitaram Thackeray (1885–1973) —social reformer, writer, and father of the Shiv Sena[16] supremo Balasaheb Thackeray (1926–2012). Both Shinde and Thackeray—the latter belonged to the intermediate *chandraseniya kayastha prabhu* (CKP) caste—were engaged in passionate polemics with the renowned *brahman* historian V. K. Rajwade

(1863–1926) who denied *kshatriya* status to the *marathas* and CKPs, and was an important architect of the Hindutva-centric interpretation of Shivaji.[17]

Nationalist

An early articulation of this construct is found in the writings of Gopal Hari Deshmukh (1823–92)—a pioneering social reformer and publicist—and Rajaramshastri Bhagwat (1851–1908), who taught Sanskrit at St. Xavier's College (Bombay) and was a prolific writer. In an article (1848) published in the weekly *Prabhakar*, Deshmukh described Shivaji as a revolutionary who established a new and higher political order founded on *swarajya* (self-government).[18] In his book *Shivaji Charitra* (1889), Bhagwat projected the Maratha king as a product of Maharashtra's syncretic socio-cultural milieu, and as a symbol of a potential national identity contra British colonialism.[19]

The *locus classicus* of the nationalist construct is *Rise of the Maratha Power* (1900)—a historical tract penned by Mahadev Govind Ranade. Ranade refuted the charge of British historians such as James Grant Duff (1789–1858) that Shivaji was an unscrupulous adventurer.[20] He argued that the king's rule had a strong popular base and a spiritual foundation; it thus heralded the emergence of a national consciousness: "the rise of the Maratha Power was . . . a genuine effort on the part of the Hindu nationality, not merely to assert its independence, but to achieve . . . the formation of a Confederacy of States animated by a common patriotism."[21] To Ranade, the *bhakti* movement propelled by the medieval saint-poets had prepared the ground for Shivaji's rise to power: "It made the nation more humane, at the same time more prone to hold together by mutual toleration. It suggested and partly carried out a plan of reconciliation with the Mohamedans."[22] Unlike Phule, Ranade saw Ramdas in a positive light: "Shivaji's chief adviser was Ramdas, who gave the colour to the national flag and introduced a new form of salutation, which displayed at once the religious character of the movement and the independence of the spirit which prompted it."[23]

While Ranade's interpretation highlighted the inclusive nature of Maratha nationalism vis-à-vis the Muslims in particular, fellow liberal nationalist K. T. Telang (1850–93)—Indologist and (like Ranade) Judge at the Bombay High Court—saw the Marathas as champions of the Hindu cause: "the main inspiring principle of the whole movement initiated by Shivaji and carried out by his successors . . . was the preservation of the Hindu religion against foreign aggression."[24] The motif broached by Telang in 1892 found expression in the Shivaji public festival, which B. G. Tilak launched as an anti-colonial platform in the mid-1890s. In an article published in 1895, Tilak wrote:

> Anyone who has the slightest understanding of history, and of *swarajya* (self-rule) as also *swadharma* (one's own religion or faith), knows what kind of courage, virility, valor, intellect and other such extraordinary qualities are required of the man who seeks to restore *swarajya* and *swadharma* centuries after their destruction; or knows the dire need felt by a nation for a celestial savior (*avatari purush*) when it is threatened with extinction . . . [such a sensible person] would spontaneously acknowledge the necessity of a memorial to Shivaji Maharaj.[25]

Thus, the ground was prepared for the Hindutva-centric construct as discussed in the following section.

Hindutva-Centric

This construct was prefigured in Eknath Annaji Joshi's ballad, "The Advice Given by Dadoji Kondadev to Shivaji Maharaj" (1877). A *brahman* conservative, Joshi depicted Shivaji as a defender of Hinduism, who rescued his religion from the onslaught of Isalm.[26] The Hindutva-centric construct was clearly and forcefully articulated by the historian V. K. Rajwade, who collected and published an enormous amount of materials on Maratha history. He viewed Shivaji as a religious rebel protesting against Muslim tyranny and as the founder of a Hindu kingdom in opposition to the alien Mughal imperial rule. While downplaying the importance of the "otherworldly" *bhakti* movement, Rajwade zealously projected Ramdas as a champion of Hindu empowerment and as Shivaji's guru. This is evident in his following remarks:

> [During the 17th century] it was believed that the Hindu faith (*dharma*) in Maharashtra comprised the Hindu faith (*dharma*) in regions other than Maharashtra + the creation of a righteous order (*dharma*) + the protection of cows [considered sacred by the Hindus] and *brahmans* + the establishment of self-rule (*swarajya*) + unification + mastery. It was this set of beliefs that Ramdas designated as Maharashtra Dharma and which Shivaji and his followers sought to consolidate and propagate by putting their lives and possessions on the line.[27]

Quite logically, he saw the brahmanical Peshwa regime of the eighteenth century as expanding and completing the Hindu upsurge.[28]

Subsequently, Vinayak Damodar Savarkar (1883–1966), a prominent leader of the Hindu Mahasabha,[29] was among the ardent advocates of the construct. In his book *Hindu-Pada-Padashahi* (1925), he described Dadoji Kondadev as the young Shivaji's "guardian,"[30] and Ramdas as the king's "spiritual and political guide."[31] Commenting on the inception of the Maratha upsurge, he wrote: "It was essentially a Hindu movement in the defense of Hindu Dharma for the overthrow of the alien Muhammadan domination, for the establishment of an independent, powerful Hindu Empire."[32] The latter objective was achieved by the successors of Shivaji: "He founded a Hindu principality—it had yet to grow into a Hindu Empire. This was all done after the death of Shivaji."[33]

Communist

This construct is best exemplified by the veteran communist leader Shripad Amrit Dange (1899–1991) who claimed that Shivaji had introduced revolutionary changes in property relations pertaining to land.[34] In "Shivarayache Athavave Svarup"—a Marathi article published in the weekly *Yugantar* (April, 1958), he argued that Shivaji transferred ownership of land to the cultivating peasants by destroying the might of the feudal *deshmukhs*[35] who earlier exercised significant military, administrative and judicial powers at the local level. He claimed that the king created a nonhereditary

bureaucracy, thereby bringing the peasantry into direct contact with a centralized, monarchical state. Furthermore, he portrayed Shivaji as the leader of a peasant revolution and favorably contrasted his peasant army with the mercenary army of the Mughal emperor.

In various speeches and writings, Dange traced the historical emergence of a Maratha nationality and held that it crystallized during the Shivaji era. However, he explicitly rejected the contention that the tussle between Shivaji and the Mughals was the expression of a religious conflict between Hinduism and Islam. To him, it represented the contradiction between self-rule and tyranny. Similar views as to the emancipatory role of Shivaji had been articulated by Dange's comrade Lalji Pendse (1898–1973) in his Marathi book *Dharma ki Kranti* (1942). In a contemporary work (1944) on Maratha history, Pendse's position is summarized as follows: "Shivaji was the leader of the down-trodden peasants of Maharashtra against the dominating landlord class. . . . There were Hindu *Deshmukhs* and *watandars* who were as much opposed to Shivaji as the Muslim rulers themselves. It was a war of the exploited against the exploiters."[36] It may be noted *en passant* that Pendse, despite being ideologically poles apart from the liberal or Hindutva-oriented commentators on Shivaji, resembled them in projecting Ramdas as a source of intellectual inspiration to the king.[37]

Interestingly, it was Comrade D. K. Bedekar (1910–1973) who offered the most cogent critique of Dange's and Pendse's (as well as liberal and Hindu nationalist) interpretations of Shivaji in his Marathi book, *Samyukta Maharashtra* (1947).[38] Bedekar's analysis of the Maratha king's role is best read in his own words:

> Shivaji belonged by birth and achievement to the ruling class of *jagirdars* [nobility]. He successfully defied the Mughal imperial power and established an independent kingdom. As a benevolent ruler and administrator, he won the confidence of his people. He was a devout Hindu and tolerant to non-Hindus. [. . .] He did not effect any revolutionary or radical reforms in the field of land-tenure. . . . His army was, like armies in those times, recruited from peasants, but was not a peasant revolutionary (guerilla) army. Shivaji could not and did not unite the Maratha people into a nationality.[39]

This assessment corresponds broadly to the one offered by Stewart Gordon—a reputed American historian whose volume on the Marathas was first published in 1993 as part of *The New Cambridge History of India*.[40]

Consensual

The Samyukta Maharashtra Movement of the 1950s sought to carve out a separate state for Marathi speaking people by reorganizing the state of Bombay which had been constituted as a Presidency in the colonial era and also included parts of today's Gujarat and Karnataka.[41] It elicited the participation of political forces spanning a wide ideological spectrum and witnessed the invocation of Shivaji as a symbol of regional pride.[42] When Maharashtra was formed as a full-fledged state within the Indian federation in 1960, the medieval ruler gained a place of prominence in its official iconography. In the

new regime based on the political domination of the *marathas* and the continued cultural hegemony of the *brahmans*, the regnant discourse on Shivaji amalgamated various elements present in the earlier constructs.

The resulting consensual construct portrayed Shivaji as a valiant son of the soil, representing the unity and identity of Maharashtra, and as a benevolent *kshatriya* king. In his popular biography of Shivaji, published by the National Book Trust–an autonomous organization of the Government of India–the historian Setumadhavarao Pagadi (1910–94) articulated the consensual construct as follows:

> Shivaji is one of the great national figures of India. A man of faith as well as action, this extraordinary statesman and general, created a nation, gave its people a cause to fight and die for and established a State permeated with a spirit of tolerance and justice: a truly secular and welfare State. [. . .] the *Hindawi Swarajya*–a State of the sons of the soil. [. . .] In course of time, his movement assumed the form of an all-India struggle; a struggle which was to change the political map of India. [. . .] Shivaji's personality and message are relevant today as they were in the past.[43]

This construct has been widely disseminated through multiple channels such as school textbooks, the mass media, public statues, monuments, spectacles and ceremonies.[44] It might be particularly pertinent to note the way the Standard IV textbook on History and Civics, which is prescribed for nine-year-old students in thousands of schools affiliated to the Maharashtra State Board of Secondary and Higher Secondary Education, projects the Maratha king as a paragon of virtue:

> Shivaji was a torch-bearer in the dark night of slavery; a fighter who got the better of all difficult situations; who slowly but surely increased his strength while giving fight to powerful enemies; who encouraged his comrades and fooled his opponents and, in the end, achieved his goal. He was a model son, a cautious leader, *a skilled organizer, a benevolent administrator*, a clever military strategist, a terror to the wicked, a defender of the good, *and an epoch maker*. When one sees all these brilliant facets of his personality one cannot but say to oneself: "Bring to memory his wonderful image and remember his great achievements."[45] (emphasis added)

The virtual deification of Shivaji, which the passage suggests, is manifested most vividly during the celebrations marking his birth anniversary, as is evident in the following newspaper account:

> Young men dressed in traditional attire with orange headgear, accompanied by the beat of the dhol-tasha [drums] by different troupes and cries of "Jai Shivaji" and "Jai Bhawani" ["Hail Shivaji," "Hail Goddess Bhawani"] were part of the Shiv Jayanti celebrations in the city [Pune], on Tuesday [February 19, 2013].
>
> Different city mandals [clubs] took out processions in the city especially near Lal Mahal, the place where Shivaji lived during his childhood. The main attractions were the plays, based on different stages of Shivaji life:

> Small children dressed like Shivaji were . . . [a highlight of] these processions. The Chava Yuva Sanghatana [a *maratha* youth organization] garlanded the Shivaji statue. The Maharashtra Cosmopolitan Education Society (MCES) organised a rally where 10,000 students from the minority [read Muslim] community participated with enthusiasm. The rally started from Azam Campus and concluded at Lal Mahal after being flagged off by MCES President P. A. Inamdar, who called on students to help drought affected villages.
>
> The Education Board of the Pune Municipal Corporation also took out a huge procession from Bhavani Mata temple to the Education Board office in Shivajinagar. Statues of the Maratha warrior king were displayed in pandals in different parts of the city where songs praising Shivaji Maharaj were played.[46]

Thus, the consensual construct has become an integral constituent of the Marathi-speaking people's cultural memory and is a central motif of present-day Maharashtra's self-image as a regional political community. As the three incidents narrated in the following section reveal, any form of expression deemed to be a defamation of Shivaji draws the ire of Maharashtrians and quickly drains their reserves of tolerance. The public outcry each of them triggered also points to the fissures underlying the precariously constructed façade of regional unity by bringing to the surface old and new animosities between *marathas* and *brahmans*, between Hindus and Muslims.

Memorable Contests

The first episode began with the publication of an article entitled "Maharashtrateel Shivaji Stom" (The Shivaji Cult in Maharashtra) in the August 1, 1973 issue of *Ranangan* (which means "battleground"), a Marathi left-wing periodical published in Pune. A history teacher at Marathwada University (Aurangabad), Pandharinath Ranade, contributed the article. Ranade sought to dispel the aura surrounding Shivaji and his regime by invoking a rather orthodox Marxist understanding of feudalism. Accordingly, he emphasized the similarity between the medieval ruling classes: "A nobleman living in the Sultanate, Mughal or Maratha Government might differ in matters of costume, etiquette and religious predilection. But he shared a common social identity. He lived on the surplus extracted from the labouring classes."[47] This denial of the distinctiveness and benignity of Shivaji's rule provoked a public outcry and governmental pressure targeting the author of the article as well the editor of *Ranangan*, Anil Barve. Consequently, Ranade had to resign his university post.

The next twist in the plot saw the hapless historian's colleagues in the Indian History Congress—a large and prestigious professional organization founded in 1935—rallying to his support. During its winter session in 1973, the Congress adopted a motion pleading for Ranade's reinstatement. The motion also included a broader affirmation of the critical role to which every historian is entitled:

> [It is the historian's] social obligation to place his findings, however controversial, before the public. The ground that his findings . . . may go against some current

belief or prejudice is not sufficient to suppress the freedom of expression of a historian or teacher. In fact the historian owes it to society to contribute towards removal of popular prejudices by a more scientific reappraisal of the past.[48]

The Congress claim that "no historical character or institution or school of thought is above the historian's scrutiny"[49] scarcely found a resonance in the larger society. Yet, its plea for Ranade did not fall on deaf ears, and he was eventually allowed to resume his post.

At the center of the second episode lay an article entitled "Myth and Supermyth," which appeared in the April 10–16, 1993 issue of *The Illustrated Weekly of India*, a popular periodical that used to be published by the Mumbai-based Times Group. Its author, Nancy Adajania, was a young woman studying English literature at the University of Bombay. Her article was meant to expose the "nationalist" (read Hindu chauvinist) parties' opportunistic homogenization of historical figures into superhuman symbols. The author's contentions about Shivaji were unsavory, though not entirely original: the Maratha king sought legitimacy by manufacturing a genealogy, his administrative infrastructure was borrowed from the Mughal rulers, and the empire he created was based on extortion. Adajania summarized the implications of the received Shivaji corpus as follows: "that the nation was essentially Maratha/Hindu, that this nation was protected by a State which could sponsor dacoity and terrorism to maintain itself; that the Mughals, the Adilshahi, and all Muslims by extension were foreigners and enemies whose existence threatened this nation/State."[50]

A report condemning the article and its author appeared in the Marathi newspaper *Kesari*, triggering a volley of protests, withdrawal of the issue from the market, a public apology from the editor of the *Weekly*, and the registration of a criminal case against the publisher and the author for promoting communal enmity. A defiant Adajania refused to apologize in the face of imminent arrest, while her supporters released a statement emphasizing the purely intellectual intent of the impugned article and lamenting the State's substitution of legal action for academic discussion. But she was adjudged to be innocent by Justice Michael Saldanha of the Bombay High Court. The judge said, "the authorities appear to have clearly overlooked and overstepped the constitutional guarantee of freedom of expression as embodied in Article 19 of the Constitution."[51] He described the action contemplated by the Maharashtra government as "distressing, misguided and misdirected."[52]

The Pune-based Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute (BORI) —a venerable center of Indological research—was vandalized on January 4, 2004 for its alleged complicity in the writing of James Laine's controversial book, *Shivaji: Hindu King in Islamic India* (2003), published by Oxford University Press.[53] The attack was launched by activists of the Sambhaji Brigade, a militant *maratha* organization named after Shivaji's elder son. The attack on BORI sprang from the perception that the Institute's librarian and certain scholars associated with it (many of them were *brahmans*) had helped Laine, Professor of Religious Studies at the Macalester College in the United States, to write the book. They were particularly incensed by what they perceived as the book's reckless reference to an insidious joke about Shivaji's parentage: "The repressed awareness that Shivaji had an absentee father is also revealed by the fact that

Maharashtrians tell jokes naughtily suggesting that his guardian Dadaji Konddev was his biological father."[54] In the wake of critical comments on the book, carried by two Marathi periodicals, *Rangataranga* and *Chitralekha,* a campaign against Laine and his alleged native informants gathered momentum.

By late 2003, Oxford University Press had been compelled to withdraw the book, and activists of the Shiv Sena had blackened the face of a *brahman* scholar accused of collaborating with Laine. After the attack on BORI, a criminal case was registered against the author and the publisher for posing a threat to social harmony, and the book itself was banned, though Laine had issued a statement apologizing for inadvertently hurting people's sensibilities. The ban was finally lifted by the Supreme Court in July 2010. But as far as Maharashtra is concerned, it remains in force for all practical purposes. In fact that year witnessed a dramatic sequel to the controversy. In December 2010, the statue of Dadoji Kondadev was clandestinely removed from the historic Lal Mahal (Pune),[55] apparently with the combined backing of the *maratha*-dominated Indian National Congress and the Nationalist Congress Party, which controlled the Pune Municipal Corporation. The incident greatly pleased forces like the Sambhaji Brigade, which had campaigned for the removal of the statue, even as it sparked off vehement public protests by the champions of Hindu nationalism, especially the Shiv Sena and the Bharatiya Janata Party.[56]

Conundrums of Regional Identity

As is evident, in these and other similar cases, a variety of political forces advance their own agenda by using manipulative tactics and fanning the flames of intolerance to take undue advantage of public reverence for Shivaji. It is customary to see such cases as instances of the threat posed by chauvinist forces to the freedom of expression. One may debate as to how such freedom can be reconciled with the imperative of respecting popular sentiment. This would then lead to a larger preoccupation with the contradictions endemic to "imperfectly modernized" societies that subject individual rights to the overbearing pressures of democratic politics. Such concerns are quite legitimate.[57] But it might be instructive to locate the aforementioned controversies vis-à-vis the contested character of regional identity in modern Maharashtra.

Let us not forget that even the famed tolerance of the late modern European nations gets frayed and their seemingly stable cultural identity is unsettled when they confront the "alien" norms and practices of non-White immigrant communities. It is no wonder that the perceived profaning of iconic figures like Shivaji leads to flared tempers and excesses in the volatile regional public sphere, which is vitiated by deep-rooted inter-caste antagonism and tensions between religious communities. As the foregoing discussion amply testifies, during the last century and a half, different versions of the Shivaji corpus have clashed over the status of *brahman* authority-figures like Ramdas and Dadoji Kondadev.[58] While almost all prominent *brahman* commentators of various ideological stripes—nationalist (such as, for example, M. G. Ranade), Hindutva-centric (for example, V. K. Rajwade) and even communist (like Lalji Pendse) —have treated Ramdas as Shivaji's guru, key *bahujan* commentators, beginning with Jotiba Phule, have refused to grant him such a role and some polemicists

have even cast aspersions on the saint's character.[59] Moreover, the image of Shivaji as a hero defending Hindus from the depredations of Muslim rulers is not a monopoly of the hardcore champions of Hindutva; it also appears in the writings of liberal nationalists (for example, K. T. Telang) and mainstream academic historians such as J. V. Naik.[60]

The three episodes that we have re-visited reveal a disjuncture between "civil society," which seeks to act as a guardian of cosmopolitan modernity and "political society," which serves as an arena for the articulation of parochial passions and interests.[61] The response of the Indian History Congress to the controversy triggered by Pandharinath Ranade's article, upholding the sanctity of untrammeled historical inquiry, as also Justice Saldanha's Order in the *Illustrated Weekly* case, striking a blow for intellectual freedom, represent the voice of civil society. On the other hand, the Sambhaji Brigade and the Shiv Sena may be said to represent two poles of the region's political society. Principles and arguments that seem perfectly straightforward in the somewhat rarefied medium of civil society undergo strange refractions when they enter the fraught domain of political society.[62] Sensitivity to the protocols and nuances of intellectual discourse—a key feature of the former—has no place in the rough-and-tumble world of the latter.

Above all, it needs to be noted that each of these episodes occurred in the wake of covert and overt conflicts in the society and politics of Maharashtra. The Ranade controversy of the early 1970s had as its background the discontent of the masses suffering disempowerment and deprivation more than a decade after the formation of the state, a discontent which found expression in the emergence of radical movements among *dalits* (ex-untouchable communities) and *adivasis* (tribespeople), which challenged the legitimacy of the ruling classes.[63] The *Illustrated Weekly* case followed hot on the heels of the Hindu-Muslim riots and bomb blasts in Mumbai, following the demolition of the Babri Masjid—a medieval mosque in Uttar Pradesh—by militant Hindu nationalists in December 1992. In both these instances, it was particularly important to rebuff challenges to the consensual construct of Shivaji's legacy—a long-standing prop of regional unity which was unraveling along class, caste and communal lines.

A major subtext of the Laine and Konddev imbroglios was growing restlessness among the *marathas* due to the perceived fracturing of their hegemony and solidarity that had been assiduously sculpted by Y. B. Chavan (1913–1984) who was the first Chief Minister of Congress-ruled Maharashtra after the state was formed in 1960. The broad social coalition constructed by Chavan had broken down due to the mobilization of *dalits* (particularly evident in the protracted agitation launched in the 1970s to press the demand for re-naming the Marathwada University after B. R. Ambedkar) and Other Backward Classes (intermediate castes that were granted quotas in public sector jobs by the V. P. Singh-led federal government in 1990) beyond the parameters he had laid down. The political ascendancy of the *maratha* elite, which rested on the latter's control of the Congress in Maharashtra, was also imperiled during this period by repeated attempts of the party High Command to sideline them, and by the growing salience of Hindu nationalist parties like the Shiv Sena and the Bharatiya Janata Party, who joined forces and ruled the state from 1995 to 1999.

Additionally, festering inequalities within the *maratha* caste-cluster had seen the emergence of a serious rift between the "high-born" (*shahannav kuli*), politically dominant propertied elite, and the numerous *kunbi* underclass. While the *kunbis* had for long shared the *kshatriya* status of their elite brethren and basked in the latter's reflected glory, little tangible gain had fallen to their lot; nor did they have the benefit of quotas in educational institutions and jobs, which were available to *dalits* and Other Backward Classes. The consequent frustration had been experienced with particular poignancy by the youth constituting the backbone of the Sambhaji Brigade (an organization affiliated with the Maratha Seva Sangh—a community service league founded in 1990) that mimicked the street-fighting tactics of the Shiv Sena, even as it pitted (a suitably modulated version of) the Bahujan construct of Shivaji against the Sena's penchant for the Hindutva-centric construct. Not surprisingly, the Brigade is said to have received support from the *maratha*-dominated Nationalist Congress Party (launched in 1999 and headed by the veteran leader Sharad Pawar) seeking to sharpen its competitive edge.[64]

Scholars investigating the dynamics of regionalism would do well to heed the insight highlighted by historians like Ernest Renan (1823–92) and Pierre Nora (b. 1931) that a nation (and *eo ipso,* a supposedly "sub-national" regional community like Maharashtra) sustains itself through strategies of selective commemoration as well as amnesia.[65] The exegeses and episodes presented above might alert them to the ambiguous role of historical memories lodged in the complex interweave of collective consciousness. While such continually contested and re-constituted memories may cement regional identity, they also have the potential of drastically disrupting it when subterranean social contradictions re-emerge in moments of crisis. There are no easy roadmaps for those who wish to traverse and map the minefield of the "past continuous."

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NOTES

1. K. T. Telang, "Gleanings from Maratha Chronicles," paper read before the Deccan College Union on September 17, 1892. It appears as an appendix in M. G. Ranade, *Rise of the Maratha Power* (New Delhi: Publications Division, Government of India, 1974), p. 146. George Grote (1794–1871), the British historian best-known for his monumental work on ancient Greece, held that the "curtain" of Greek myth concealed no historical facts, and this was his response to the curious reader who asked why he did not withdraw the curtain to disclose the picture: "I reply in the words of the painter Zeuxis when the same question was addressed to him on exhibiting his masterpiece of imitative art—'the curtain *is* the picture,'" cited in Frank M. Turner,

Contesting Cultural Authority: Essays in Victorian Intellectual Life (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 332.

2. Prachi Deshpande, *Creative Pasts: Historical Memory and Identity in Western India, 1700–1960* (Ranikhet: Permanent Black, 2007), p. 208.
3. See Subrata Mitra, *The Puzzle of India's Governance: Culture, Context and Comparative Theory* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), pp. 124–25.
4. In this article, the term "Maratha" is used to denote the community of Marathi-speaking people, while the term "*maratha*" denotes the most numerous and dominant caste-cluster in Maharashtra.
5. The *brahmans* constitute a caste-cluster located at the pinnacle of the traditional Hindu social hierarchy.
6. Y. D. Phadke, ed., *Mahatma Phule Samagra Vangmay* (Mumbai: Maharashtra Rajya Sahitya ani Sanskriti Mandal, 1991), p. 43. The term "*samagra vangmay*" means "complete works." Unless otherwise specified, all translations from the Marathi are mine.
7. Phadke, ed., *Mahatma Phule*, p. 48.
8. Shivaji's father Shahaji Bhosale (1594–1664) was a commander who served the states of Ahmadnagar and Bijapur as well as the Mughal Empire at various points of time. During the turbulent years after Shivaji's birth in 1630, Shahaji was treated as a rebel and pursued by the Mughals. Shivaji and his mother Jijabai (1598–1674) moved from fort to fort till 1636 when they were able to settle down in Pune which was administered by Shahaji's agent Dadoji Kondadev. There was minimal direct contact between father and son. See Stewart Gordon, *The Marathas, 1600–1818* (New Delhi: Foundation Books, 1998), p. 59.
9. Phadke, ed., *Mahatma Phule*, p. 556.
10. Ibid., p. 440.
11. Ibid., p. 471.
12. See Gail Omvedt, *Cultural Revolt in a Colonial Society: The Non-Brahman Movement in Western India: 1873 to 1930* (Bombay: Scientific Socialist Education Trust, 1976), p. 64.
13. Krishnarao Arjun Keluskar, *Kshatriyakulavantas Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Yanche Charitra* (Mumbai: Niryasagar Press, 1907).
14. The *bhakti* movement, which emphasized devotion to a personal God, was a major socio-cultural force in medieval India. It opposed the brahmanical penchant for ritualism, social exclusiveness, and priestcraft, accorded primacy to human dignity and held caste as well as gender distinctions to be irrelevant in the spiritual domain. The saint-poets associated with this movement used the "vernacular" languages (such as Marathi) rather than Sanskrit as the primary medium of religious discourse. See Surjit Mansingh, *Historical Dictionary of India* (New Delhi: Vision Books, 1999), pp. 65–66.
15. See Omvedt, *Cultural Revolt*, p. 60. "Peshwa" was the title of the chief of Shivaji's Council of Ministers. During the reign of his grandson Shahu in the early decades of the eighteenth century, the incumbent Peshwa Balaji Vishwanath (a Chitpavan Brahman) and his successors consolidated their hold over and eventually became *de facto* rulers of the Maratha polity. Taking advantage of the decline of the Mughal Empire, the Peshwas greatly expanded the territories under their control and emerged as a major power in the country. Peshwa Bajirao II was decisively defeated by the British in 1818. For a historical overview and assessment of the Peshwas (and of the Maratha polity more generally), see Gordon, *The Marathas*, pp. 178–95.
16. A political party launched in Bombay in 1966, the Shiv Sena (Shivaji's Army) initially projected itself as a champion of the Marathi-speaking sons of the soil. The Sena began to foreground its Hindu nationalist agenda in the 1980s and allied with the like-minded Bharatiya Janata Party. See Rajdeep Sardesai, "The Shiv Sena's New Avatar: Marathi Chauvinism and Hindu Communalism," in Usha Thakkar and Mangesh Kulkarni, eds., *Politics in Maharashtra* (Bombay: Himalaya Publishing House, 1995), pp. 127–46.When Assembly elections were held in Maharashtra in 1995, the alliance defeated the hegemonic Indian National Congress and ruled the state up until 1999.
17. See Gail Omvedt, *Cultural Revolt in a Colonial Society*, pp. 60–61.
18. See Deshpande, *Creative Pasts*, p. 96.
19. For a detailed account of Bhagwat's book, see Rosalind O'Hanlon, "Maratha History as Polemic: Low Caste Ideology and Political Debate in Late Nineteenth-Century Western India," *Modern Asian Studies* Vol. 17, No. 1 (1983), pp. 21–25.
20. Grant Duff's pioneering if tendentious three-volume opus, *A History of the Mahrattas* (London: Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown, and Green, 1826), remained a major reference point for much of the subsequent writings on the subject. For an overview of the book, see Gordon, *The Marathas*, pp. 2–3.
21. Ranade, *Rise of the Maratha Power*, p. VIII.
22. Ibid., p. 76.
23. Ibid., p. 5.
24. Telang, "Gleanings," pp. 124–25.
25. Bal Gangadhar Tilak, "Shri Shivaji Maharaj Yanchya Smarakabaddal Suchana," in Laxmanshastri Joshi, ed., *Lokamanya Tilak Lekhasangraha* (New Delhi: Sahitya Akadem, 1969), p. 378.
26. For an elaborate exegesis of the ballad, see O'Hanlon, "Maratha History as Polemic," pp. 25–32.
27. V. K. Radjwade, "Marathi Rajyacha Hetu," in Laxmanshastri Joshi, ed., *Rajwade Lekhasangraha* (New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 2009), p. 175.
28. Ibid., pp. 190–91.

29. A political party founded in 1915, the Hindu Mahasabha had as its chief objective the protection and promotion of the Hindu "race," culture and civilization for the advancement of the Hindu nation. Savarkar became President of the party in 1937. During the first decade of the twentieth century, he was an active advocate of armed resistance to the colonial regime. He was held guilty of involvement in 'seditious' activities and imprisoned by the British from 1911 to 1924.
30. Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, *Hindu-Pada-Padashahi or a Review of the Hindu Empire of Maharashtra* (New Delhi: Bharti Sahitya Sadan, 1971), p. 31.
31. Ibid., p. 34.
32. Ibid., p. 31.
33. Ibid., pp. 37–38.
34. This paragraph is based on the summary of Dange's arguments provided by D. K. Bedekar, "Review of Interpretations on Shivaji's Achievements," in *Science and Human Progress: Essays in Humanities, Indology, Science, Mathematics and Personal Tributes to late Prof. Damodar Dharmanand Kosambi* (Bombay: Popular Prakshan, 1974), pp. 79–80.
35. The historian Stewart Gordon describes a *deshmukh* as the head of an armed elite family, who controlled a *pargana* comprising 20–100 contiguous villages, and exercised a set of rights which encompassed revenue collection, adjudication, maintaining troops, and ritual leadership during festivals. To Gordon, the history of the Maratha polity is coterminous with that of the *deshmukh* families. See Gordon, *The Marathas*, pp. xiii–xiv; 23–35.
36. S. R. Sharma, *Maratha History Re-examined, 1295–1707* (Bombay: Karnatak Publishing House, 1944), p. 300. I have replaced the diacritical marks in the original text by phonetically equivalent orthography.
37. See Deshpande, *Creative Pasts,* p. 137.
38. D. K. Bedekar, *Samyukta Maharashtra* (Pune: K. S. Gupte, 1947), pp. 136–76.
39. Bedekar, "Review of Interpretations," pp. 85–86.
40. Gordon, *The Marathas*, pp. 80–90.
41. The standard work on the Samyukta Maharashtra Movement is Y. D. Phadke, *Politics and Language* (Bombay: Himalaya Publishing House, 1979).
42. This is clearly evident in Lalji Pendse, *Maharashtrache Mahamanthan* (Mumbai: Lokavangmay Griha, 2010), pp. 387–92 and *passim*. Comrade Pendse played a prominent role in the Left-led movement for statehood, and his substantial volume documenting key events and debates that marked it was first published in 1965. In an article entitled "The Future of Regional Identities in India: The Case of Marathi Speakers and Maharashtra" (available at http://www.ciil-ebooks.net/html/kelkar/html1/i117.htm), Ashok Kelkar—former Professor of Linguistics and polymath scholar—notes that Shivaji sought to make Marathi the chief language of administration by promulgating "texts like *Rājyavyavahārakosha* (a lexicon of statecraft) and *Ājñāpatra* (a compilation of standing orders) and thus brought about a substantial reduction of the Perso-Arabic borrowings (from 85% in 1628 to 6% in 1728)."
43. Setumadhavarao S. Pagadi, "Introduction", in *Shivaji* (New Delhi: National Book Trust, India, 1993). For an analogous Marathi account, see A. R. Kulkarni, *Ashi Hoti Shivashai* (Pune: Rajhans Prakashan, 2000).
44. See the Standard IV textbook that has been part of the core school curriculum in Maharashtra: *Shivachhatrapati* (Pune: Maharashtra State Bureau of Textbook Production and Curriculum Research, 2010). Shivaji has been portrayed in hagiographic fashion in the textbook and in numerous novels, plays, films and television programs. For a critical account of the relevant Marathi films, see Veronique Benei, "'Globalization' and Regional(ist) Cinema in Western India: Public Culture, Private Media, and the Reproduction of a Hindu National(ist) Hero, 1930–2000s", *South Asian Popular Culture* Vol. 6, No. 2 (October 2008), pp. 83–108. Statues and portraits of Shivaji are a ubiquitous feature of the state's visual landscape. Additionally, the Government of Maharashtra plans to invite architects from across the globe to build a statue and memorial of Shivaji in the Arabian Sea off Mumbai at an estimated cost of $ 60,000,000. See "Maharashtra to Invite Foreign Architects to Build Shivaji Memorial in Arabian Sea," *The Economic Times*, August 9, 2013; and "A Controversial Memorial," *Mid Day*, March 21, 2012. The international and domestic airports in Mumbai as well as the city's historic railway station and museum—earlier known as the Victoria Terminus and the Prince of Wales Museum—have been (re)named after Shivaji.
45. *Shivachhatrapati*, p. 106. The last line is a popular quotation from a letter Ramdas purportedly wrote to Shivaji's son Sambhaji at a time when the latter had lost his father. The two opening words of the line were used by S. A. Dange as the title of his previously discussed Marathi article. The italicized words (the emphasis is mine) did not figure in the 1992 edition of the textbook. The characterization of Shivaji as an epoch-maker (*Shaka-karta*) can be traced to the voluminous writings of G. S. Sardesai (1865–1959) on Maratha history. He published a Marathi book entitled *Shaka-karta Shivaji* in 1935. See Govind Sakharam Sardesai, S. M. Garge, ed., *Marathi Riyasat*, Vol. 1 (Mumbai: Popular Prakashan, 1988).
46. "Puneites Celebrate Shiv Jayanti with Pomp and Gaiety," *Sakal Times*, February 20, 2013. I have inserted the explanatory text in square brackets. Also see, "Shiv Jayanti Celebrated in Maharashtra," *The Hindu*, February 19, 2013. An analysis of the socio-political dynamics involved in the annual celebration of the festival commemorating Shivaji's birth is available in Daniel Jasper, "Celebrating the Region through Historical Commemoration," in Rajendra Vora and Anne Feldhaus, eds., *Region, Culture and Politics in India* (Delhi: Manohar, 2006), pp. 239–52.

47. Cited in Girja Kumar, *The Book on Trial: Fundamentalism and Censorship in India* (New Delhi: Har-Anand Publications, 1997), p. 432.
48. Ibid., p. 433.
49. Ibid., p. 433.
50. Nancy Adajania, "Myth and Supermyth," *The Illustrated Weekly of India*, April 10–16, 1993, p. 34.
51. Cited in the editorial "Scholarship & Sentiment," *The Times of India*, April 26, 1993.
52. Ibid.
53. For a detailed account of the episode from a liberal standpoint, see Martha C. Nussbaum, *The Clash Within: Democracy, Religious Violence, and India's Future* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), pp. 237–44.
54. James Laine, *Shivaji: Hindu King in Islamic India* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 93. This salacious piece of gossip and the provocative title aside, the book is a scholarly endeavor focusing on the transposition of different social realities to legends of Shivaji at different points of time.
55. The Lal Mahal is a historic building where Shivaji spent his childhood.
56. "53 Buses Destroyed During Shiv Sena Bandh," *The Hindu*, December 28, 2010.
57. Cf. Sumit Ganguly's analysis of violence against the Muslim minority in contemporary Burma: "rapid democratization in plural societies [recovering] from years of colonial rule may well provide opportunities for unscrupulous ethnic entrepreneurs to stoke crude nationalist sentiments, promote ethnic discord and provoke violence." See Sumit Ganguly, "Burma's Long Road to Democracy," *The Asian Age*, October 12, 2013.
58. While Shivaji supposedly proclaimed himself "protector of the cows and *brahmans*," and had many close *brahman* associates, the *brahmans* in Maharashtra refused to accept his *kshatriya* status. Consequently, he had to invite Gagabhat—a *brahman* from North India—to officiate at his coronation in 1674. See Gordon, *The Marthas*, pp. 87–88.
59. See Namdevrao Jadhav, *Shivaraya: Chhatrapati Maharajancha Ladhayanvyatirikt Khara Itihas* (Pune: Shri Sambhaji Subhedar Bhame, 2010), pp. 337–363.
60. Mr. J. V. Naik retired as Head, Department of History, University of Bombay in 1994 and was President of the Indian History Congress in 2007. In an article contributed to a volume arising out of the Shivaji Coronation Tercentenary celebrations, he described Maratha nationalism as "a compound of geographical integration and cultural affinity, cemented by a common religious faith and stimulated by the galling Muslim domination." Further, he wrote of the young Shivaji embarking on "the ingenious, daring and systematic course of liberating his country from the Mahomedan yoke." See J. V. Naik, "The Foundation of Swarajya," in *Shivaji and Swarajya* (Bombay: Orient Longman, 1975), p. 44, 51. The book was compiled and sponsored (with financial support received from the Government of Maharashtra) by the Indian Institute of Public Administration (Maharashtra Branch) housed in the state secretariat.
61. This distinction between "civil society" and "political society" is a variation on the analytical binary formulated by the Indian political theorist Partha Chatterjee. It is best treated as an open-ended, heuristic device, not as an empirical description of clearly demarcated sectors. See Partha Chatterjee, "On Civil and Political Society in Postcolonial Democracies," in Sudipta Kaviraj and Sunil Khilnani, eds., *Civil Society: History and Possibilities* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 165–78.
62. Perceptive readers will recognize the Burkean provenance of the metaphor invoked here; hopefully, without interpreting it as an endorsement of conservatism on the part of the present author. In his critique of natural rights, Edmund Burke (1729–97) made the following celebrated statement:

    > These metaphysic rights entering into common life, like rays of light which pierce into a dense medium, are by the laws of nature refracted from their straight line. Indeed, in the gross and complicated mass of human passions and concerns the primitive rights of men undergo such a variety of refractions and reflections that it becomes absurd to talk of them as if they continued in the simplicity of their original direction.

    (Cited in Kenneth L. Deutsch and Joseph R. Fornieri, *An Invitation to Political Thought* (Belmont, CA: Thomas Higher Education, 2009), p. 368).
63. See Leslie J. Calman, *Protest in Democratic India: Authority's Response to Challenge* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1986).
64. See the newspaper report, "Why NCP needs the Sambhaji Brigade," *Hindustan Times*, December 28, 2010.
65. Cf. Afshin Marashi, *Nationalizing Iran: Culture, Power, and the State, 1870–1940* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2008), p. 112.